

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

USCINCEUR

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SUBJECT: ZEMETCHA PROBLEMS/ARUSSI/WOLLEGA/SHOA

1. AMHARIC LANGUAGE MEDIA HAVE CARRIED SEVERAL ARTICLES RECENTLY ON DEVELOPMENTS IN ARUSSI PROVINCE. WHILE ENGLISH LANGUAGE HERALD CARRIES ROUTINE REPORTS ON WORKING TOUR OF DIRG MEMBERS IN ARUSSI PROVINCE, AMHARIC LANGUAGE ADDIS ZEMEN CARRIES ARUSSI PMAC TEAM'S TERN WARNING TO REACTIONARIES POSING AS ZEMETCHA WORKERS, "WOLVES IN SHEEPS' CLOTHING," WHO HAVE ATTEMPTED TO DISRUPT ETHIOPIAN POPULAR MOVEMENT.

2. RADIO ETHIOPIA SOURCE TOLD EMBOFF THAT ZEMETCHA WORKERS OR IMPOSTERS POSING AS ZEMETCHA WORKERS HAD ORGANIZED THREE GROUPS OF APPROXIMATELY 150 WORKERS/PEASANTS INTO WHAT THEY TERMED "RED GUARD" UNITS. THESE UNITS WERE TRAVELING ABOUT ARUSSI PROVINCE RELIEVING LAND HOLDERS OF THEIR MONEY AND POSSESSIONS AND DISTRIBUTING IT AMONG THEMSELVES. A LOCAL PEASANT ASSOCIATION APPARENTLY DESCENDED EN MASSE ON ONE OF

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THE GROUPS ARRESTING THE ENTIRE 150, WITH 40 OF THE 150

INJURED IN THE ENSUING VIOLENCE.

3. SAME RADIO ETHIOPIA REPORTER, WHO INTERVIEWED SOME OF THOSE 40 HOSPITALIZED, REPORTED THAT SOME APPEARED TO BE IN FAIRLY SERIOUS CONDITION AS A RESULT OF BEATINGS. THOSE ABLE TO TALK CONTENDED THAT THEY WERE MISLED BY PHONEY ZEMETCHOCH AND THAT REPORTS OF THEIR ACTIVITIES WERE GREATLY EXAGGERATED.

4. ADDIS ZEMEN REPORTS A TOTAL OF 180 OF THESE "REACTIONARIES" ARRESTED IN ARUSSI PROVINCE. ETHIOPIAN TELEVISION COVERED EVENTS EXTENSIVELY, INCLUDING STERN WARNING AGAINST THOSE WHO MIGHT ATTEMPT SAME TYPE OF DISRUPTIVE ACTIVITIES.

5. EMBASSY HAS REPORTS OF ZEMETCHA DISTURBANCES IN SENDAFE (40 KM NORTH OF ADDIS) WITH ZEMETCHOCH STOPPING TRAFFIC (ACCORDING TO RADIO ETHIOPIA, TO DEMAND MONEY) AND OTHERWISE DISTURBING DOMESTIC TRANQUILLITY.

6. RADIO ETHIOPIA IN AMHARIC, EVENING OF AUGUST 4, REPORTED ABOVE INCIDENTS AND STRONGLY CONDEMNED ZEMETCHA EXCESSES. ANNOUNCEMENT EXPLICITLY CONDEMNED STUDENTS WHO SEDUCE DAUGHTERS OF PEASANTS, INTIMIDATE PEOPLE, BEG OR TAKE MONEY, FOOD AND DRINK, AND INTERFERE WITH PUBLIC TRANSPORT. "IT IS NOT DIFFICULT," REDIO ETHIOPIA RAID, "TO IDENTIFY WRONG DOERS. THEY ARE THE ONES WHOSE PARENTS ARE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY LAND REFORM." COMMENT: IN OUR VIEW, TROUBLEMAKERS ARE THE MORE RADICAL STUDENTS AND THOSE WITH WEAK LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND POOR PROJECTS. END COMMENT.

7. AMERICAN SOURCE RETURNING FROM WOLLEGA PROVINCE WAS STOPPED BY APPROXIMATELY 300 STUDENT CAMPAIGNERS 100 KM FROM ADDIS WHO REFUSED TO LET CAR PASS UNTIL HE WOULD FILL FACANT SPACE IN CAR WITH ZEMETCHOCH. STUDENTS TOLD HIM THAT THEY WERE RETURNING TO ADDIS BECAUSE OF LACK OF FOOD IN THEIR CAMPS BUT ALSO TO PROTECT SOME OTHER (UNSPECIFIED) MATTERS, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND CONCERNS ARMED PEASANT GROUPS THREATENING ZEMETCHA. SECOND SOURCE JUST RETURNED FROM WOLLEGA REPORTS ARMED GUARDS RIDING PROVINCIAL BUSES TO KEEP ZEMETCHA OFF.

COMMENT: NATIONAL WORK CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS HAS IN THE PAST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ADMITTED ITS INABILITY TO CONTROL ZEMETCHA WORKERS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. HIGHLY PUBLICIZED GOVERNMENT CRACK-DOWN PROBABLY SIGNALS BEGINNING OF DIRG CAMPAIGN TO CONTROL QEMETCHA-IMPIRED LAWLESSNESS. TO KEEP RECORD STRAIGHT, HOWEVER, WE UNDERSTAND THAT MANY AND LIKELY MOST OF THE 56,000 ZEMETCHOCH DO USEFUL WORK, ESPECIALLY WHEN WELL LED. FOR GOOD OR ILL, THEY REMAIN CENTRAL TO PMAG'S LAND REFORM EFFORTS.

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